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Our Little Secrets

"What's necessary is to create an armed group of indigenous, cause them to confront the Zapatistas, they fight, people die, the army enters to restore peace."

The Plot To Frame The Zapatistas

On February 28, La Jornada published an essay by Subcomandante Marcos that paints a vivid picture of Spanish and Mexican leaders conspiring to promote terrorism. Marcos explains that exposure of these links was of one of the purposes underlying the Zapatistas' proposed trip to the Canary Islands, which they have now cancelled.

CounterPunchers will recall a polemic that erupted last December between Subcomandante Marcos and Baltasar Garzon, the Spanish judge world-famous for indicting Pinochet [see CP, December 2002]. Garzon challenged Marcos to a debate on terrorism; Marcos accepted on condition that the debate take place as part of a larger encounter on paths for resolving the Basque conflict, to include representatives from the Spanish government and the terror group ETA. ETA disavowed the proposed encounter and told Marcos to mind his own business in a communiqué dated January 1. Marcos responded to ETA on January 12 with a communiqué whose theme was contained in its pithy conclusion, "I shit on the revolutionary vanguards of the entire planet."

In his latest writing, Marcos explains that the Zapatistas will not take

(**OLS** *continued on page 2*)

A Pre-War Diary

Turkish Delights

BY TARIQ ALI

Just received a message from Ayse Gul Altinay one of the veterans of the Turkish peace movement. When I met her in Istanbul a few months ago she was a bit despondent. Their anti-war march had consisted of the usual suspects and not all that many of them. But she and her group pressed on and on 1 March their labour's resulted in a tremendous leap forward. Ayse writes:

"Turkey made history today! I just finished sending 'thank you' messages to the parliamentarians saying that we were ready to shoulder the economic consequences of this decision together. This is a new strategy that has been used very effectively during the recent anti-war campaign in Turkey: sending SMS messages to the members of Turkey's parliament. It is so much more effective than any other form of communication! These messages have been accompanied by email notes, phone calls, visits to the parliament, daily demonstrations of all sorts (from primary school students opening money boxes in the streets to human rights organizations sending army boots to the very few people who have supported the war), and massive anti-war rallies in the last two months. The citizens of Turkey have stood united against the war and have made this clear to their representatives.

"Today Turkey had its biggest rally and its most important vote in the parliament. Both were in Ankara. Several kilometers away from each other, between 80-100 thousand peace activists gathered to say 'no to war' and more than 500 parliamentarians came together to say a very big NO to U.S. demands for soldier deployment and use of bases.

"The rally was historic in terms of both the number of participants (it was one of the largest rallies in Turkey since the 1980 military coup) and the diversity of the people it brought together. Islamist human rights groups were walking meters behind gay and lesbian groups standing under similar banners, chanting the same slogans: 'We won't kill and we won't die, we won't be anybody's soldiers! 'If the Parliament votes yes to war, the Parliamentarians should go and fight!' —It was a determined, energetic, excited crowd!

"At exactly the same time, the Parliament was having a closed session which would result in a historic vote. We do not know what they discussed behind closed doors. All we know is that the Grand National Assembly of Turkey has refused to participate in the war and to assist the U.S.A. in its war campaign. Tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers who are on their way to Turkey will have to be deployed elsewhere. If the current decision stands, no northern front for this war! As the AKP (ruling party) members of parliament decided to face the dire economic consequences of this decision, close their eyes and ears to months-long blackmail and negotiations, and dare to risk the integrity of their own party, they were responding to the loud call from their own citizens to oppose the war and listen to their own conscience."

This result came as a shock. Not only to the U.S.A and Britain, but to almost everyone! It has already been defined as an 'earthquake' in TV discussions.' The

(**Turkey** *continued on page 6)*

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Our Little Secrets

part in an encounter that lacks the "endorsement of ALL nationalist forces of the Basque Country and that runs the risk of becoming a tribunal that judges the absent." At the same time, this essay ought to provoke thoughtful discussion on the double standard for terrorism by state and non-state actors.

Marcos's story is based in part on a confidential source "very close to the circles of political and economic power from 1993 to 1996". After the failure of Zedillo's February 1995 military offensive against the EZLN, says Marcos, "the generals Renan Castillo (military chief and *de facto* governor of Chiapas) and Cervantes Aguirre (Secretary of National Defense) insisted on the necessity of activating paramilitary groups to confront the Zapatistas (Renan Castillo had studied with the Americans and Cervantes Aguirre was in a torrid honeymoon with his U.S. homologue, so the option. . . had the backing of the American State Department.)

"Nevertheless, Zedillo was undecided. In this same year of 1995, there appears a personality from the Spanish government. 'This presidential intimate,' says [Marcos's] source, 'attended meetings that were not strictly social, but which touched on matters of state.'

"In one of these meetings, Zedillo commented on the Zapatistas and the problem of how to finish them off, since they had public opinion on their side. The Spanish government personage then said that what must be done was to destroy the legitimacy of the Zapatistas and then deliver the blow. Zedillo reminded the personage [of the recent offensive]. The Spaniard clarified that. . . if the Zapatistas fought for the indigenous, it was necessary to make them fight against the indigenous. In Spain, said he of that country, we have created some groups to counter Basque separatism. Zedillo said he knew of the GAL (Antiterrorist Liberation Groups) and that there had been an investigation to demarcate governmental responsibilities in the kidnapping and assassination of ETA cadres.

"The Spaniard was unashamed and indicated that killing and kidnapping assassins is not a crime, but a favor to society. He added that the GAL did other things, like committing attacks later attributed to ETA. Zedillo asked if the king knew of this. The Spaniard responded: 'The king knows what suits him and pretends not to know what doesn't suit him,' and added that nothing happens, just a few days of scandal in the press, that no one will investigate when the dead are terrorists, that there are grave decisions to be taken for reasons of state.

"Zedillo indicated that that wouldn't work here, because the Zapatistas are not terrorists. 'Make them terrorists,' says the Spaniard, and goes on, 'What's necessary is to create an armed group of indigenous, cause them to confront the Zapatistas, they fight, people die, the army enters to restore peace.' The Spaniard continues: 'We could lend you a hand with some tips, some experience. Of course we hope for some cooperation from your government in turn, such as the extradition of ETA cadres who live in your country.' Zedillo says that it's not certain they are cadres. 'No problem,' says the Spaniard, 'we'll take charge of what they may be.' The Spaniard adds that his government could also help the Mexican government in trade negotiations with Europe, and ends his argument with a phrase: 'Man, Ernesto, if we Spaniards are experts at anything it's exterminating the indigenous.'

"The [confidant's] information brought us this far. The rest is rapidly inferred: Zedillo orders the activation of the paramilitary groups, the Spanish government gives advice, and the Mexican government increments the extradition of supposed ETA cadres.

"On December 22, 1997, a paramilitary group marches to a confrontation with the Zapatistas. The latter redeploy to avoid a clash among indigenous and advise non-Zapatistas of the threat. In Acteal remain Las Abejas, unarmed and confident that, being neutral, nothing will happen to them. The butchery starts and finishes, while police and soldiers patiently wait to enter and 'impose peace' on the indigenous 'confrontation.' The truth is discovered almost immediately thanks to the media. The news goes around the world and shocks all noble human beings. In Los Pinos, Zedillo just repeats: 'Why women and children?'

Marcos then mentions circumstances suggesting that Zedillo's Spanish friend could well have been Felipe Gonzalez, the former social-democratic president. Along the way he mentions the dirty arrest of Basque political leader Jon Idigoras, ordered by Judge Garzon. Evidence of Idigoras's criminal past included his singing of a Basque song during a 1981 visit to Guernica by King Juan Carlos.

The EZLN had decided that a planned European trip should begin in Spanish territory and touch on the Basque theme, so as to make inquest into the Spain-Mexico collusion. "Thus stands answered the frequent question: 'Why does the EZLN get involved in the issue of the Basque country?' It was the Spanish government that involved the Basque issue in the indigenous struggle of Mexico, not us.

"The Zapatistas considered it our obligation to go to Spain to demonstrate to the king, to Felipe Gonzalez, to Jose Maria Aznar and Baltasar Garzon that they lie that 'if the Spaniards are experts at anything its exterminating the indigenous,' since we continue alive, resisting and in rebellion. . . . We launched a provocation that had Felipe Gonzalez as its principal objective. We failed to provoke Gonzalez, but in his place fell, wounded in his ego, the Judge Baltasar Garzon."

Marcos directs a paragraph of juicy invective against Judge Garzon, who never responded to Marcos's conditional acceptance of his debate challenge. "He thus demonstrated that he is good for interro-

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gating tortured prisoners, for getting in photographs with families of terror victims and waging a campaign of self-promotion for the Nobel Peace Prize, but that he does not dare to debate with someone moderately intelligent." Garzon is not really a grotesque clown, says Marcos; "only a talker and a coward."

Jack and Jill Went Up The Hill To Fetch Their Neuroleptics

By Christine TenBarge

Here before us is the January 2003 issue of Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine (APAM), one of the dozen journals of the American Medical Association, revealing astonishing rates of psychotropic drug use by America's children.

It' s a 10-year perspective on rates of psychotropic drug medication, put together by a team of PhDs and MDs in one of those hugely popular academic 'collaborative efforts' from colleges of pharmacy, medicine, epidemiology and preventive medicine, psychiatry and behavioral sciences, education, administration and health policy, and pediatrics.

The researchers culled data on 900,000 youths enrolled in two healthcare systems from a Midwestern and mid-Atlantic state and an HMO-insured system in the Pacific Northwest. The two systems, Medicaid (fee-for-service) reimbursement method and a nonprofit, group model health maintenance organization (HMO) were chosen to represent three distinct areas of the country.

As you might guess, nonwhites were hugely over-represented in the Medicaid populations as well as greatly under-represented in the HMO, which served a population of mostly employed people in the Pacific Northwest. As you also might guess, male youth was over-represented in the gender category. You might not guess, however, that where previously African American males led the numbers of youths medicated with psychotropic drugs, in the 15 years between 1987 and 1991, white and Hispanic males aged 10-14 have taken a slight lead, suggesting to the team of researchers that time served on psychotropic drugs for children has lengthened.

Psychotropic drugs (antidepressants, anxiolytics, neuroleptics, hypnotics, lithium, stimulants, aka Prozac, Ritalin, Risperdal, Neurotin) are used to treat behavioral and emotional disorders in children, and are also used to treat related and unrelated conditions in adults. For kids younger than 20 the researchers found psychiatric drug prescription rates tripled from 1987 to 1996. By 1996 six per cent of children were taking drugs such as those listed above. In the 1990s, youth psychotropic drug treatment rates nearly reached adult rates, with two to three times more children receiving psychotropic medication of all types, promoted by pharmaceutical companies, prescribed by medical doctors, dispensed during the school year by parents and public school personnel.

The Medicaid systems accounted for proportionally more children younger than five years and fewer 15 to 19 year olds than the HMO insured population. The 10-14 year olds replaced the 5-9 years age group as the largest using psychotropic drugs in the Medicaid populations. Within the HMO-insured group, however, the 15-19 years age group was the largest using psychotropic meds.

The most dramatic surges occurred for rates of amphetamine prescription. For the mid-Atlantic Medicaid-insured youth, the increase was 7-fold; for the HMO-insured, a 14-fold increase. Antidepressant meds use came in a close second. But none increased in use as severely as the class of Agonist medications. Agonist are meds like clonidine prescribed for high blood pressure in adults, but used for kids in combination with stimulants, because, what goes up must come down, and agonists bring you down. The agonist rate went from near non-use in 1987 to within the top five meds prescribed by 1996.

What, between 1987 and 1996, caused groups of Medicaid-insured children to be labeled as psychotic or manic?

The young people receiving the meds often have little or no say in whether or not they want to be drugged all day long, for years on end. The long term effect on children is unknown or so prospectively unappetizing that no one wants to look into it further. Someone should be asking why our children are so out of control that they need drugs for anxiety at the age of 10; or what in the period between 1987 and 1996 contributed or caused groups of Medicaid-insured kids to be labeled psychotic or manic or anxious and then forced to take neuroleptics, mood stabilizers, anticonvulsants, stimulants and lithium to control behavior, and then downers to sleep, at levels four times more prevalent than HMO-insured kids.

The perfunctory practice of prescribing psychotropic drugs for children on Medicaid more often and longer than children with HMO insurance smacks of racism and stinks of greed. Drug companies know good and well they can influence doctors to use their products; teachers face larger classrooms and fewer resources for dealing with so called hyperactive children and pressure parents; parents, especially those forced to use Medicaid, are often overwhelmed with basic survival issues and beg doctors for help, they don't have time to read the research questioning the wisdom of drugging their kids.

Hand in hand with the article comes an editorial hastening to offer the comforting judgement that 'No single decision or participant in this system was or is evil'. But of course there are guilty parties, unless your definition of bad guys doesn't include the pharmaceutical industry.

Neither the editorial nor the article mention the investigation of Pfizer Pharmaceutical' s Warner-Lambert division for alleged illegal payments to doctors to prescribe the neuroleptic drug gabapentin, brand name, Neurontin, which is an FDA-approved drug for treating some forms of epilepsy, also found to be useful in treating some neurological conditions. The company began promoting its use in a number of nefarious ways, as became apparent when Medicaid claims increased to the point of making it the seventeenth most prescribed drug in 2000 with sales in the millions. Nor do the editorial or article mention that the drug manufacturers' is the top-spending lobby in Congress with a crew of 400 lobbyists and nearly a $100 million budget to promote their wares.

CounterPuncher Christine TenBarge is an assistant professor of Social Work at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

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At Last, the Book We've Been Waiting For

The Mumia Case, In True Colors

BY SCOTT HANDLEMAN

Abu-Jamal is a famous prisoner of the left, in the tradition of Sacco and Vanzetti and the Rosenbergs. Now *Killing Time* by Dave Lindorff, (Common Courage Press, $19.95) offers us the first credible, carefully researched narrative of the case. The book is commendable for its allegiance to truth, even as it describes how Abu-Jamal, a black man in the clutches of a racist criminal justice apparatus, has seen justice repeatedly thwarted for twenty-one years. Lindorff brilliantly managed the hardest play of all, which is to have written a book with good politics which isn't just a herogram about an icon of the left.

A black activist and radio journalist, Mumia was arrested in 1981 for the shooting death of a Philadelphia cop, Daniel Faulkner. Since then, his case has gradually become a popular cause. I remember my first march for Abu-Jamal, in the summer of 1995 when the clock was ticking down on a death warrant. Maybe a thousand protesters carried a torchlight vigil through foggy San Francisco streets, among us a hefty contingent from Food Not Bombs, a freedom-loving cohort of unwashed food servers then on bad terms with the SFPD. A couple of dumpsters were torched so the police cornered the crowd, arrested over 200 people and charged them with arson. A few of us escaped into a sympathetic stranger's apartment building, just ahead of a mad cop in riot gear pounding on the door. Years later, on his birthday in 1999, I went to the Millions for Mumia March in Philadelphia. Intervening years of organizing bore fruit with the large multi-racial crowd, respectfully treated by police. It seemed like tens of thousands clogged the streets. Bus after chartered bus came from New York and other cities, and I even ran into a couple of friends who had flown up from Florida. I remember a festive and chaotic atmosphere, bowls smoked among friends; a fiery speech by Zach de la Rocha; and Mumia's deep voice sounding eerily from speakers as a hush descended on the crowd.

Another thing I remember about my friends was that our sketchy knowledge about the case did not dampen our readiness to agitate for his freedom. Abu-Jamal's partisans put out compelling flyers highlighting the oddities and injustices of his trial; listed together on a page, these glaring facts strongly suggested a frame-up.

But the zeal of Abu-Jamal's staunchest advocates to proclaim his innocence is unlikely to persuade a broad audience of the justice of his cause. *Killing Time* is a refreshing contrast. In thorough and systematic fashion, Lindorff lays out the facts of the crime and then analyzes the trial, appeals, and extra-legal maneuverings of the various parties. Plowing through reams of court transcripts, interviews and secondary sources, he analyzes prosecution and defense theories, exposing implausible arguments and contradictory testimony on both sides. Not hesitating to report the outrageous rulings of Abu-Jamal's judges, suspicious conduct of police and prosecutors, and craven acts of his own counsel, Lindorff is equally unstinting in his criticism of foolish decisions and unconvincing statements by Abu-Jamal himself. None escape the scythe of Lindorff's truth-finding pen, not even the widow Maureen Faulkner, who lied to the media about a devilish gesture that Abu-Jamal could not have made at her.

None escape the scythe of Lindorff's truth-finding pen, not even the widow Maureen Faulkner, who lied to the media about a devilish gesture that Abu-Jamal could not have made at her.

Lindorff shows how Abu-Jamal's trial starred a cast of characters who are the true archetypes of American justice: a biased judge, merciless prosecutor, bumbling defense lawyer, overly-selected jury, and (probably) evidence-manufacturing cops. At the same time, he explains where Abu-Jamal's own vacillations and naïve decisions played into the hands of enemies to secure his conviction.

For example, Lindorff relates how Abu-Jamal selected Anthony Jackson to defend him, a politically-compatible lawyer who had never been lead counsel on a death penalty case. A few weeks before the start of trial, realizing Jackson's shortcomings, Abu-Jamal demanded to represent himself, at which point Jackson stopped preparing for trial. Over Abu-Jamal's objections, Jackson was re-appointed by Judge Sabo on the day before the start of trial. Lindorff points out that Jackson could have requested a few weeks' delay to ready himself; instead, he opted to "try and wing it". After naming Jackson's misdeeds in unambiguous terms, Lindorff dispels the theory that Jackson was part of a conspiracy to remove Abu-Jamal's right of self-defense, telling how at one point he bravely honored his client's wishes in the face of a six-month criminal contempt sentence by Judge Sabo.

While Lindorff's dedication to truth is unwavering, he does not appeal to false ideals of even-handedness to mask the cold brutality with which Abu-Jamal was railroaded onto death row. Arrayed against Jackson and Abu-Jamal was the mighty law-and-order apparatus of Philadelphia, which Lindorff paints in floridly venal colors. Abu-Jamal's judge, Albert Sabo, popularly known as "the hanging judge," had at the time of his retirement sentenced more convicts to death than any other jurist in America: 31, of whom 29 were non-white. Lindorff investigates a court reporter's allegation that Sabo said of Abu-Jamal, "I'm going to help them fry the nigger". Lindorff, who devotes a chapter to the culture of police spying and brutality that prevailed in Philadelphia in the early

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1980s, lists 17 police officers who played parts in Abu-Jamal's arrest or investigation and who were later "disciplined, indicted for crimes, found guilty of committing acts of corruption or brutality, or resigned from the department under a cloud of suspicion after being named by corrupt officers."

Through the methodical dissection of evidence, Lindorff raises strong doubts in the reader's mind about what actually happened on the night of the shooting. He organizes the state's evidence into three sets: circumstantial evidence; eyewitness testimony to the shooting; and accounts of a confession that Abu-Jamal purportedly blurted out. According to Lindorff, the eyewitness evidence was weak because "none had seen the whole incident, . . . and each of them had her or his own problems of credibility." One witness, Robert Chobert, was on parole for the paid firebombing of a school, and admitted in 1995 that he had asked prosecutor McGill for help in clearing a suspended driver's license. (Judge Sabo did not allow the jury, entrusted with weighing the credibility of witness testimony, to hear of Chobert's mercenary enterprise, ruling that it was not a crime of falsehood.) Another, Cynthia White, was a prostitute with 38 arrests on her record. In one of many lucid appeals to the reader's common sense, Lindorff inquires whether, "as a prostitute with outstanding warrants and open charges against her, is it likely that seeing the shooting, she would have hung around until the police showed up?" Veronica Jones, a prostitute called by the defense who unexpectedly changed her story on the stand, admitted in the 1995 appellate hearing that police had promised her freedom to walk the streets in exchange for fingering Abu-Jamal. Lindorff highlights major contradictions in witness testimony, such as the fact that Chobert and White did not recall seeing each other on the scene of the crime.

Cornerstones of the prosecution's case were statements of a police officer and security guard that Abu-Jamal loudly confessed to the crime at the hospital. Lindorff is dubious about these statements, stressing that their circumstances suggest "a grand conspiracy to falsify evidence". Specifically, no officer mentioned the confession for over two months, and it contradicts the statement of Wakshul, the officer guarding Abu-Jamal at the hospital, that "the negro male made no comment". Jackson overlooked Wakshul's statement until the last day of trial; Sabo refused to grant a brief continuance so that Wakshul could be questioned about the discrepancy. Lindorff argues that "presented to the jury as fact, the confession . . . was a devastating blow." Juries are reluctant to impose a death sentence for fear of dooming an innocent person, but "a confession can prove critical in helping to ease or eliminate those qualms".

The second half of Lindorff's book covers events following Abu-Jamal's conviction. He devotes two chapters to Abu-Jamal's post-conviction hearing, held before the appalling Sabo. Tom Ridge, now head of Homeland Security, makes a sordid cameo as Governor of Pennsylvania, signing a death warrant just as Abu-Jamal was about to request his hearing, probably on information from tampered legal mail. Ridge thereby gave Sabo an excuse to rush the hearing and deny discovery requests by the defense. Lindorff notes that Ridge became an architect of the USA Patriot Act, which erodes the attorney-client privilege in the name of combating terrorism.

Lindorff's following chapter, discussing the changeover in Abu-Jamal's legal team and Abu-Jamal's decision to make an innocence defense based on the Beverly theory, has earned him the scorn of certain Abu-Jamal choristers. A fissure arose within Abu-Jamal's legal team over whether he should use Arnold Beverly's affidavit confessing to Faulkner's murder. Attorneys Leonard Weinglass and Daniel Williams convinced Abu-Jamal not to use the confession, on the grounds that it was not credible. But in 1999, Williams wrote a book on Abu-Jamal's case in which, astonishingly, he equivocated about Abu-Jamal's innocence. Lindorff agrees that Abu-Jamal had good reason to be upset with both Williams and Weinglass over publication of the book, noting, not emphatically enough, that Williams' uncertainty "would seem to be an ethically improper public stance for a defense lawyer to take regarding his or her client". Abu-Jamal fired Weinglass and Williams, and his new lawyers encouraged him to pursue the innocence claim.

In the spring of 2001, Abu-Jamal issued an affidavit proclaiming his innocence for the first time, and publicized affidavits by his brother and Beverly. As with every critical fact, Lindorff evaluates the affidavits with professional skepticism, scrutinizing it in the light of common sense and weighing it against other bits of evidence. According to Abu-Jamal's affidavit, he heard gunshots, looked up and saw his brother staggering in the street, exited his car and ran to help his brother, at which point he was shot by Faulkner. Lindorff points out that this contradicts the testimony of key witnesses that Abu-Jamal was in the street before the first shots were fired. Abu-Jamal's brother's and Beverly's affidavits are even more doubtful to Lindorff.

Because Lindorff tests his facts against each other and against intuitive truths about human nature and the real-life functioning of the justice system, his narrative has the ring of truth. It is a boon to Abu-Jamal's cause, far likelier than an impassioned polemic to convince the reader that he has not had "even the approximation of a fair trial" or appeal.

So, did Abu Jamal shoot Faulkner? Possibly, Lindorff concludes, but he is "almost certainly innocent" of first degree murder.

Those wanting an extra dollop of squalor should be sure to read Lindorff's assessment of the media coverage of the case, in which thosewho would have hastened Mumia into the death chamber, such as Sam Donaldson or The Nation's Marc Cooper, are displayed in their true unlovely colors.

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(**Turkey** *continued from page 1*)

excitement is understandable but the National Security Council in Turkey (i.e. The Generals) has the constitutional power to override an elected government. So the question is whether Turkish democracy will be trampled en route to the 'liberation' of Iraq.....just like Richard I embarked on a series of pogroms against the Jews en route to fight the Crusades in the Holy Lands.

Berlin Calling

Several Sundays ago, I was in Berlin debating Professor Ruth Wedgewood, an adviser to Donald Rumsfeld. Ruth, a lapsed social-democrat, was very entertaining in private but faced with a large German audience (writers, artists, poets, playwrights and Foreign Office mandarins) at the Schaubuhne —the largest theatre in the city— she stiffened and defended the line, praising Tony Blair's "convincing dossier" which proved that Saddam was guilty, etc. At one point she stunned her audience by informing them that the reason the Germans oppose to the war is because "you're scared of Saddam". The audience gasped. Given that Anglo-American culture is still obsessed with World War Two--viz the never-ending stream of TV documentaries on the Third Reich and movies and books--one would have thought that the purveyors of power would be delighted by the fact that most Germans tend to hate wars. But no. For refusing to support the war on Iraq they're regarded as wimps. After the debate a senior German official walked up to me and said: "Herr Ali, listening to your opponent was an anthropological experience."

Earthquake in London; Blair Still Alive

What annoys the Blair loyalists the most is that despite their mastery of spin they have not been able to turn the country on this war. For the first time in recent British history the country is opposed to the war. 53 percent are completely opposed (regardless of the Security Council) but 80 percent are opposed if Blair backs Bush without UN sanction. The 199 Members of Parliament (120 of whom were Labour) undoubtedly shook the Dear Leader. But his minions were unbowed. Words like 'courageous' were used to describe the weasel. And in the liberal press Nick Cohen of The Observer had no doubts about the war. So obsessed is he with Saddam that he has no time to think or write about Sharon or the Israeli nuclear stockpile or the Palestinians. Unlike his guru (C. Hitchens), Cohen has not come out in favour of Bush in so many words, but judging from his articles in The Observer and the Daily Telegraph he could be heading that way. The only hitch might be if Bush doesn't properly 'liberate' Iraq, ie appoint Cohen's chum Kanaan Makiya and Ahmed Chalabi(both long-time members of Quislings Anonymous), to high posts in the new regime. The problem here is that the queue is a long one....the failure to composite Chalabi/Makiya into an Iraqi Karzai might lead to talks of betrayal. But all that will have been betrayed is their illusions. Meanwhile we press ahead with the campaign to get rid of the arch-appeaser Blair, who boasts that if Bush were not preparing to wage war he (Blair) would be urging him on. This poses a question. Why wasn't he urging him and his predecessor on before it became part of the chicken-hawk agenda? 'Our leader leads from the front' declare his acolytes. Wrong again. He always leads from behind.....the behind of the US President. CP

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Tariq Ali is the author of The Clash of Fundamentalisms.

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Lindorff's Great Book on the Mumia Abu Jamal Case

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